

CONTENT STRATEGY RAISES CONVERSION AND ROI

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Have you ever been to a website and couldn't find what you were looking for?

Or the search engines gave you a page of results but none of them seemed relevant to what you were after?

If you want to get a high conversion rate (changing visitors to customers) and return on your investment from your website, it has to provide what your visitors are looking for.

Consider these scenarios:

A visitor is searching for a something specific. She does not know about your company but you come up on the search results. She figures that as you have done well in the search results, she should go to your website as you must have solutions for her.

Visitor Experience: As she lands on your website she is disappointed. She realizes that you do not have the content and information she was looking for. The design is not great and the 'Why am I here' and 'What's in this for me?' is just not there. She makes a mental note not to come back to this site.

How this affects your brand: Although this visitor didn't have any knowledge you prior to coming to your site, she went from feeling neutral to a negative image of the company in just a few seconds.

Here is another one:

This visitor is also on a mission. She does know your company name and has heard you are a player in this arena. She assumes your website will have what she is looking for. She types in www.yourcompany.com and lands on your home page.

Visitor Experience: She feels like she just walked into a maze. She wonders where this good content is that she expected – she knows it must be on here somewhere. But where is it? Should she go to this link? Or maybe that one? Hmmm, she muses. I guess they are not such major players then. They don't have the relevant stuff right on their website. Let me go to another site. Click! She's gone.

How this affects your brand: Though this is not as bad as the first one, it certainly did nothing to improve your brand. When your website does not immediately meet your visitor's needs you lose them right off the home page.

Most business websites lose 56% of their visitors from the homepage and 80% within three clicks. And your competition is just one click away!

Now consider this scenario:

A visitor comes to the site – either via a search engine or by typing in your web address. He is looking for something and hopes to find it on your website.

Visitor Experience: Ahhhhh! A well designed site with good content and simple, clear navigation. He feels like he walked into a business where everything is sign posted and clear. He knows exactly where to go. The content directs his attention to targeted and interesting information. He clicks on the links, finds the sign up form for your newsletter and happily fills it in and clicks submit. He bookmarks your site because it has such a wealth of interesting content.

How this affects your brand: This is an excellent brand building experience. You delivered what he wanted. Everything from the graphics to the content gave him the experience he expected. Your site was relevant, useful and engaging. Brand loyalty is being built, click-by-click.

SET GOALS FOR THE SITE.

Without a direction you will never find your way. Setting goals for the site is the very first thing you need to do. When you know where you want to go and what you would like your visitors to do on your site, you can set up a path to your goal page/s.

Once you have this in place you have a clear picture of exactly what you want the site to do and what tasks you want the users to do on the site

DECIDE WHO YOUR VISITORS ARE LIKELY TO BE

Visitors come to your site for a variety of reasons. Yet each one is specific. They will come via different search engines, keywords or ads. Knowing where they came from will help you understand what they are looking for and how to increase conversion.

Understanding your visitors and finding out what they do once they are on your site is one of the most important aspects of a successful content strategy.

DO KEYWORD RESEARCH

Find out what relevant keywords or phrases visitors are using to find your site. There are search term suggestion tools and software that can help you do this. Survey your current clients and ask them what terms they searched on to find your site.

Do the research to find out which of these terms is getting the most traffic and what other similar terms are being searched on.

Choose the terms and phrases that best describe what your business or website is about. Try to choose a word or phrase that is not too general. The competition on that phrase will be huge and you will get traffic that is not perfectly targeted – you'll get visitors who are not looking for what you do exactly.

MAKE YOUR HOME PAGE PAY OFF

What the visitor sees is what he believes you are. Your website is your face to the world and it must position you correctly and reflect the image of who you are and what your capabilities are – just by how it looks and what it says.

Print out the home page of your website and ask as many people as possible what that page communicates to them –

What does it say about the company?

What kind of a company do they think it is? Big, small, successful, professional etc

What do they think the company does?

OWNING A NICHE

There are over 4 billion web pages on the Internet and the traffic on the Net doubles every 100 days! Being visible in this flood of information is a staggering task. You have to carve out a niche for yourself.

There is very little that is new in this world – but you can always find a new angle and be first in your own little niche. Starbucks were not the first company to sell coffee – but they made a special niche that no one else had. Dominoes were not the first to sell pizza, but they were the first to deliver it to your door.

It is imperative that your website makes it clear who you are, what you do and why you are different from others. What is special about you, your product and your service? And most important – how does this benefit the visitor

Say precisely what you do and how it benefits the user so they know they are in the right place.

SELL THE BENEFITS FOR THE VISITOR - WHY AM I HERE? WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

The second a visitor lands on your home page it must instantly address their needs and make them feel they are in the right place. When they arrive do they immediately find what they came for?

Every visitor needs to be catered for. The content the visitor sees on the screen as they land on the site must relate to their search term or the ad they clicked on.

Don't waste valuable content telling them how wonderful your company is and how long it has been in business – this is the place for selling the sizzle – not the steak.

Use short sentences, short paragraphs. Write it in scannable text. Highlight headlines. Use bullet points. Put in interesting links and make the actual phrase the link.

Most site visitors don't find what they're looking for.

OneStat.com reports 54.60 percent of Web site visitors look through only one or two pages on a site before leaving; 16.56 percent view two to three pages; and 9.52 percent view only one page. That's over 80 percent gone within three clicks!

THE USER EXPERIENCE

Keeping stats is the very best way to manage any operation – that is proven in business. What are your users doing once they are on the site? Keeping track of your visitors and learning where they go, and why, is the most enlightening part of all this. Behavior is always the best predictor of what someone will do in the future.

Is your site usable and friendly? Is it easy to navigate? Is it easy to buy on your site?

Every site should already have a basic stats package available through their host

If you want to get into more advanced metrics and analysis then buy yourself a package you can run on your site yourself.

Once you have the stats running make sure you access them at least once a week and learn to interpret the numbers. Stats will tell you a story every time. Learn to read between the lines.

BUILD A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR VISITORS

The Internet has created a global marketplace and people are once more in conversations with one another at the touch of a button. But it does have one drawback – it is a virtual world and credibility is paramount. People are naturally cautious about who is behind the website.

Research shows it takes on average seven interactions with your website before they will do business with you. So it is vital that you build a relationship with visitors.

Create a place for visitors to give you their email addresses and permission to start a conversation with them

Offer them some valid reason to give this info – create some really useful or helpful content in exchange.

A newsletter

A white paper

Info on how to use your product

A recipe book or tips on how to....

Build up your mailing list and send out useful information on a regular basis. This positions you as an expert and someone who takes the time to assist them.

Creating a relationship will pay off – most sales are made from follow up marketing – not from the first visit to a website.

Once you have put your content strategy in place and built the best possible website you can, take the time to learn about how to create a Search Engine Strategy. Since 80% of your traffic will come via a search engine this is an important aspect of building an effective website.

A recent study showed that 80% of business sites analyzed are using technology that makes it difficult for the search engines to see and index their content – which is hurting their ability to compete online.

To implement a Content Strategy on your website use

The Content Strategy Workbook available at www.falkowinc.com

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